

Using MyLinE Online resources as a platform to develop university students' academic writing skills

Dr Su-Hie Ting

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Fatimah Puteh

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

Abstract

Conventional academic reading and writing courses are usually paper-based with many readings, exercises and writing. Nowadays with technological advancements and students penchant for internet usage, an evolution in teaching materials to include online resources is taking place. One of the readily available online language resources is MyLinE (Online Resources for Learning in English) developed by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and supported by the Ministry of Higher Education for use in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. This study examined how MyLinE resources facilitate transfer from informal to formal discussion issues in an academic reading and writing courses. The specific aspects studied were the initial generation of ideas to pooling of ideas, and changes in formality of the language used in the written texts. Data for the study were discussion texts written by undergraduates in an academic reading and writing course in a Malaysian university. Analysis of the undergraduates' discussion on a given issue and the discussion text they wrote, both online, showed that they progressed from expressing single ideas to discussing other views. In addition, the comparison of the semi-spoken and written discussion texts indicated changes in word choice, use of nominalisations and objectivisation of views expressed. The findings suggest that the undergraduates were able to adapt their language to context and the MyLinE resources enhanced the teaching-learning environment by giving quiet students a voice in the language class.

Introduction

Academic reading and writing courses usually use pen and paper approach where most input come in the form of print materials. The number of reading and writing courses that use online materials as supplements is rather low in number mainly due to the unavailability of websites that could cater for the specific needs of the learners in terms of skills required, teaching-learning strategies used and the cultural background of the learners. There are some that incorporate the necessary input and skills required for the reading and writing courses but the learning strategies incorporated and the topics included in the websites may not meet the culture of the target learners such as a topic may be considered acceptable in one culture but seen as taboo in another. In addition, materials for reading and writing courses in printed forms are abundant so much so that many educators prefer this mode of teaching.